IN REMEMBRANCE: LYNCHING IN AMERICA
THE EJI SOIL COLLECTION PROJECT
SOUTH CAROLINA

LYNCHING IN AMERICA

Between the end of the Civil War and the end of World War II, thousands of African Americans were lynched in the United States in violent and public acts of torture that traumatized Black communities locally and throughout the country. These racial terror lynchings, largely tolerated by state and federal officials, peaked between 1880 and 1940 and represented some of the most brutal violence, terrorism, humiliation, and barbarity in American history. This era of racial terrorism profoundly impacted race relations in the United States and shaped the geographic, social, and economic conditions of African Americans in ways that are still evident today. Lynching and racial violence fueled the forced exodus of millions of Black people from the South into urban ghettos in the North and West during the first half of the twentieth century and created a social environment where racial subordination and segregation was maintained with limited resistance for decades. The Black refugees and exiles who fled the American South lived in marginalizing and disadvantaged circumstances in the urban North, West and Midwest. Black people who remained in the South faced continued threat, terror and humiliation rigidly maintained by legalized racial segregation. The violence and terror of lynching created a legacy of racial inequality that has never been adequately addressed in America, and continues to sustain racial injustice and bias.

In February 2015, the Equal Justice Initiative issued a new report on *Lynching in America* documenting over 4,000 lynchings that took place in the 12 states that had the highest rates of lynching in America. With the release of the third edition of EJI's report, 300 additional racial terror lynchings have been documented that took place in the remaining states during this era. For the first time, EJI researchers characterized and catalogued lynchings and studied the locations of lynching so community members could discover their local history. Most recently, EJI released its newest report on *Reconstruction in America*, documenting nearly 2,000 more confirmed racial terror lynchings of Black people by white mobs in America than previously detailed. The report examines the 12 years following the Civil War when lawlessness and violence perpetrated by white leaders created an American future of racial hierarchy, white supremacy, and Jim Crow laws—an era from which our nation has yet to recover.

Our report on *Lynching in America* has now been read by thousands of people who have expressed a desire to engage more thoughtfully on what the legacy of lynching represents in America. We believe that understanding the era of racial terror is critical if we are to confront the challenges that we currently face from mass incarceration, excessive punishment, unjustified police violence, and the presumption of guilt and dangerousness that burdens many people of color.

THE EJI MARKER AND MEMORIAL PROJECT

To create greater awareness and understanding about racial terror lynchings, EJI intends to mark many of the spaces where lynchings took place with memorials and historical markers. Most communities have said or done nothing to acknowledge their local history of lynching. The victims of racial terror and the trauma these horrific acts of violence created has been largely ignored. The silence surrounding these atrocities had added to the sense of injury and anguish in many communities of color and contributed to less thoughtful and serious discussion around issues of race. EJI believes that by publicly marking the sites of lynchings, a necessary conversation can begin that advances truth and reconciliation.

EJI has also built a national memorial in Montgomery, Alabama - The National Memorial for Peace and Justice - that calls on the nation to reflect more seriously and thoughtfully about this error of racial terrorism and its legacy. Memorials have the power to remind us of who we once were and challenge us to confront issues of injustice and inequality we currently face with more care and with greater dedication to protecting basic human rights.

THE SOIL COLLECTION PROJECT

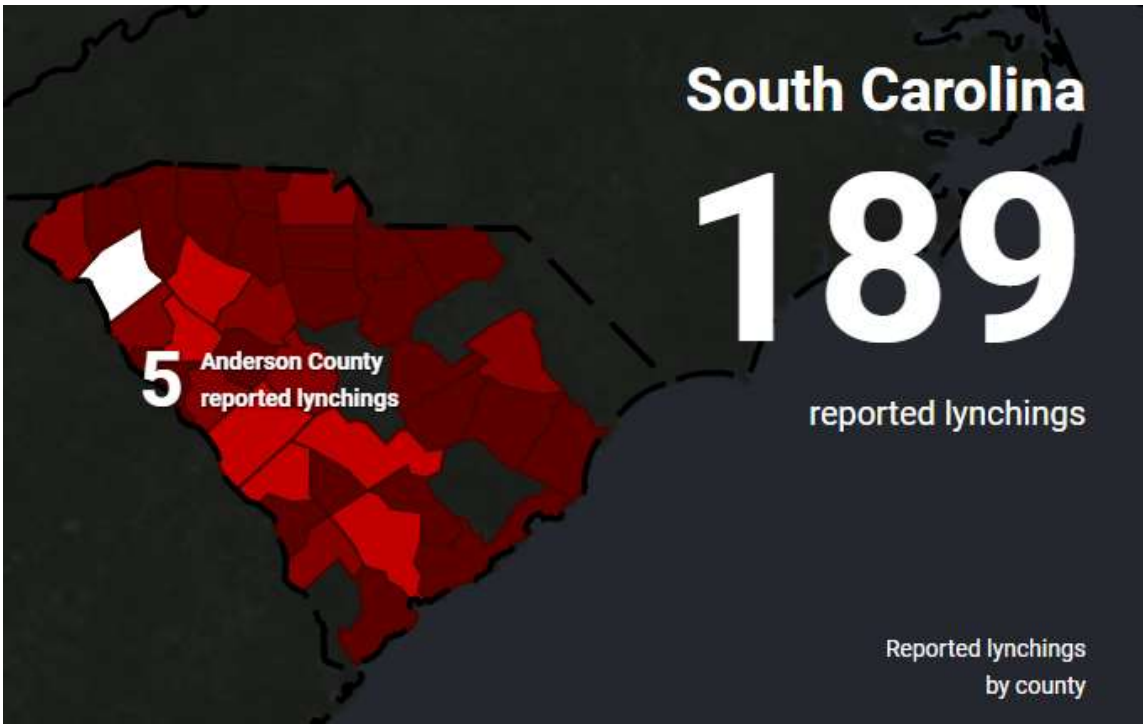
We have joined with community groups and individuals to travel to communities across the nation to collect soil from every lynching site as an act of remembrance and commitment to honoring the victims of this horrific era of terror. EJI's soil collection project is intended to provide opportunities for community members to get closer to the legacy of lynching and to contribute to the effort to build a lasting and more visible memory of our history of racial injustice. These jars of collected soil are on exhibit in the new Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration, as well as in other exhibit spaces, to reflect the history of lynching and our generation's resolve to confront the continuing challenges that racial inequality creates.

While collecting soil from the site of a lynching is a simple gesture, we believe it is an important act of remembrance that can begin a process of recovery and reconciliation to our history of lynching and terror. The named containers with collected soil that we create become important pieces of our broken and terrifying past. We believe these jars represent the hope of community members who seek racial justice and a greater commitment to the rule of law and human rights.

SOUTH CAROLINA

EJI has documented 189 African American victims of racial terror lynching killed in South Carolina. The racial terror and acts of barbaric violence that took place in South Carolina are among the worst in America. Racial terror lynchings took place in over 20 states, in both rural and more urban settlements. State officials did very little to curb the white mob violence that menaced so many African Americans, and sometimes officials were even complicit and actively involved in committing acts of racial terror.

Your participation in this project helps us begin a process of recovery and we are very grateful for your involvement.



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Edward Sullivan
Williamston, Anderson County, South Carolina, December 12, 1894

On December 12, 1894, a mob of about 500 white men abducted and lynched a teenaged Black boy named Edward Sullivan just outside the city limits of Williamston in Anderson County, South Carolina. After a young white boy from Williamston was found dead, white Williamston residents became focused on meting out "blood for blood" and went in search of the alleged assailant. When suspicion fell on Edward Sullivan, law enforcement officers took him into custody and decided to transfer him to the county jail in Anderson, South Carolina, approximately 15 miles away, due to the immediate threat of lynching. However, before the officers and Edward Sullivan made it to Anderson, the mob overtook them, seized young Edward, and carried him back to Williamston, where they hanged and shot him to death. Despite the mob's lawlessness, no one was held accountable for the lynching of Edward Sullivan.

While little is known about his early life, Edward Sullivan, who was also known as "Ed," was about 15 years old and lived with his mother in Williamston in December 1894. On the evening of Monday, December 10, a young white boy from Williamston went missing while traveling from Pelzer, South Carolina to his home. The boy had traveled with his stepfather to Pelzer from Williamston earlier that day, and his stepfather sent him back to Williamston that evening with supplies, including an axe, cloth, and a basket to take home. When the stepfather returned to Williamston on Tuesday, his wife informed him that their son had not returned.

The following morning on Wednesday, December 12, a search began to find the boy that lasted throughout the morning and early afternoon. While looking along the road, the search party encountered two white girls, who said they saw a young Black boy head into the woods with a young white boy, who matched the missing boy's description. When the search party traveled into the woods, the boy's body was found, having been fatally wounded. Reports of the boy's death spread rapidly, and a search for the alleged assailant was quickly underway. *The Watchman and Southron* based in Sumter, South Carolina reported that white Williamston residents "poured out from homes and there was a quiet determination on every face to avenge

the blood" of the young white boy. Even before a suspect had been identified, a "verdict" had been rendered among the search mob participants that there would be "Death for the murderer."

During this era, racial terror lynchings commonly followed reports of crimes committed against white people with or without evidence connecting the lynching victim to the alleged crime. Black women, men, and children would face hostile suspicion and a dangerous presumption of guilt after crimes were alleged, and the allegations of a white person against a Black person were rarely subject to serious scrutiny. Though it is unclear based on surviving news accounts what sparked the initial suspicion, *The Intelligencer*, a local Anderson, South Carolina newspaper, reported that "a party suspecting Ed Sullivan of being the murderer went at once to his mother's house" on the afternoon of December 12. After searching the Sullivan home, the mob alleged to have found some cloth that matched the description of cloth the white boy was carrying back to Williamston. It was not unusual during this era for white mobs to search Black people's property without any clear reason for the suspicion and then allege to have found something related to a reported crime. The white search mob used the alleged cloth to presume that Edward had either committed or participated in the murder. Local officers then arrested him and placed him in the local jail in Williamston.

L. B. Roberts, the local official overseeing the custody of Edward and who was also serving as the county coroner, empaneled a coroner's jury to perform an inquest soon after the white boy's body was found. During the coroner jury's investigation, Edward was interrogated and press accounts reported that he allegedly "confessed the deed." However, it was common during this era for Black people suspected of crimes to be subjected to beatings and torture in order to obtain confessions. The results of these coercive attacks would then be used as 'evidence' and a 'justification' for the racial terror lynchings that followed. Edward's young age of about 15 years old made him even more vulnerable to providing a false confession due to fear for his life and children's heightened sensitivity to authority figures and susceptibility to coercion from adult intimidation. Despite reports that the confession was 'conclusive' evidence against Edward, his confession – like those of many victims of racial terror lynchings – was more reliable evidence

of fear than of culpability.

As news of Edward's arrest moved through the community, a white mob intent on lynching him began to gather. *The Abbeville Press and Banner*, based in Abbeville, South Carolina, reported that "lynching [was]...openly spoken of and [would]...be done if not prevented." Some time before 9:30 p.m. on December 12, the Roberts decided to have Edward transferred by two officers from the Williamston Jail to the county jail in Anderson. Nearly one hour after the officers and Edward left for Anderson, the white mob came to the Williamston Jail to seize him. It was not uncommon during this era for mobs to seize their victims from jails, courthouses, and even directly out of police hands. News reports stated that the mob "would have broken down the door," but Roberts allowed the mob to see inside the jail to confirm that Edward was not there. The angry mob then set off to pursue the two constables escorting Edward to Anderson.

When the mob left the jail, Roberts sent a telegraphed message to South Carolina Governor, John Gary Evans, to alert him of the impending lynching and to request reinforcements to prevent it. Newspaper reports indicated that there was no means of communication between the Williamston jail and the Anderson county jail, and reinforcements from the county could not be secured to assist the escort officers, who were approximately five miles away from Williamston. By that time, the mob of at least 500 white men were pursuing the escort "on horseback, in buggies, and on foot, determined to overtake [Edward]...and lynch him." Governor Evans, "hearing of the trouble," telegraphed the captain of local militiamen in Greenville, South Carolina and ordered him to send troops to Williamston to "protect the prisoner threatened to be lynched" and to "use every means necessary to prevent the lynching." The telegraph arrived around midnight on December 12, but by then, Edward Sullivan had already been lynched.

At least an hour before the militiamen received the governor's telegraph, three white men in the mob overtook the two officers, drew their weapons upon them, and kidnaped Edward from their custody. Rejoining the rest of the caravan that had pursued the escort, the mob carried Edward back towards Williamston and arrived just outside the city limits shortly before midnight. The mob then took Edward to a hickory tree, hanged him to a limb

of the tree, and "riddled his body with bullets." It was reported that as many as 500 shots were fired at his body.

Roberts ordered a coroner's inquest to be scheduled for Edward Sullivan for the following morning on December 13, but there were no reported attempts to identify members of the mob after the lynching. Instead, Roberts went in search of another Black man who he suspected had committed the murder of the white boy. Press accounts indicated that it was "rumored and believed" before the lynching occurred that Edward was only an accomplice to the murder, and that another Black man had been responsible for the crime. Suspecting that he would have the man in custody by the following morning during the inquest, Roberts again appealed to Governor Evans for the militiamen to come to avoid another lynching by the same mob that killed Edward Sullivan. The *Yorkville Enquirer* of York, South Carolina reported that a Black man was eventually apprehended and interrogated. However, the man was able to provide an alibi and was released soon after.

In the aftermath of the lynching, white press coverage generally denounced the lynching as being "greatly deplored by most...citizens." However, as was common during this era, these same press accounts still sympathized with the mob and the white Williamston residents who supported the lynching. *The Intelligencer* newspaper wrote that although "lynch law" was "dangerous and demoralizing," there had to be an "allowance made for the weakness of human nature" in light of the white boy's death. The article went on to say that it had to "say in justice to the good people of the community" that although the lynching was deplorable, it was – in other words – understandable. The article, however, made no mention of the terror inflicted on Edward Sullivan and his family and the widespread impact that lynchings had on African American communities in their wake. Further, the news reports adopted the mob's assertion that Edward Sullivan was a murderer without scrutiny, despite the lack of evidence and denial of due process. Sympathizing narratives like these, embraced by white press and local white communities, contributed to the perpetuation of white mob violence and lawlessness and encouraged the reign of racial terrorism that would take the lives of over 4400 African American women, men, and children between 1877 and 1950.

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Despite the coroner's inquest that followed the lynching of Edward Sullivan, news accounts did not indicate that any further investigation was sought, nor is it clear whether a grand jury investigation was ever carried out. In the end, there is no known evidence to suggest that anyone was held accountable for the lynching of Edward Sullivan.

Edward Sullivan is one of at least four documented African American victims of racial terror lynching killed in Anderson County, and one of at least 189 documented lynching victims killed in the State of South Carolina, between 1877 and 1950.

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Location of Soil Collection

According to news accounts, on December 12, 1894, a white mob of at least 500 men lynched a Black teenaged boy named "Ed" Sullivan just outside the city limits of Williamston, South Carolina. After the death of a white boy sparked mob violence and retaliation, suspicion was directed towards Edward Sullivan, and despite attempts by law enforcement to transfer him to the Anderson County Jail for safety, the mob captured him and hanged him to a hickory tree and shot him repeatedly. Reports do not indicate that anyone was held accountable for his lynching.

Anderson County Jail was approximately 15 miles from Williamston, and the two officers escorting Edward Sullivan to Anderson were approximately five miles outside of Williamston when the mob overtook them. Based on an 1897 map of Anderson County, South Carolina, the main road leading from Williamston to Anderson is comparable to what is today Anderson Highway. Though the incorporation limits of the city of Williamston may have changed over time, there is a wooded area along Anderson Highway just outside of the city limits that could serve as a symbolic location to collect soil in memory of Edward Sullivan.

Please travel to a wooded area located at approximately **1831 Anderson Highway, Williamston, South Carolina 29697**, and find a safe and appropriate location to collect soil near the tree line in remembrance of the lynching of Edward Sullivan. If there is a hickory tree in this area, please consider collecting soil by it as symbolic of the hickory tree where Edward Sullivan was hanged.

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Elbert Harris, May 20, 1898
Anderson, Anderson County, South Carolina

On May 20, 1898, a mob of approximately 20 white men brutally whipped and beat a Black teenager named Elbert Harris, 18 years old, on the side of the road between Iva and Anderson, South Carolina. The mob took Mr. Harris from the custody of a law enforcement agent. After his attack, he was not taken to the hospital but instead was taken on to the Anderson County Jail. He died four days later due to the injuries sustained from this racially motivated attack. None of the participants in the mob were ever held accountable for Elbert Harris's lynching.

Newspaper reports indicate that several incidents of property destruction occurred in May 1898 in Iva, a small railroad town in Anderson County. On the evening of Thursday, May 19, a ginhouse belonging to a white man in Iva burned down. Suspecting arson, law enforcement officers began searching for suspects. According to press accounts, suspicion was focused on an African American family, the Harrises, that eventually led to a search of their home.

During the era of racial terror, deep racial hostility permeated Southern society and burdened African Americans with a heavy presumption of guilt and suspicion when crimes were reported, whether evidence supported the suspicion or not. According to an 1880 census, the Harris family lived in an area known as "The Dark Corner" in Iva where Elbert Harris's father, Asbury Harris, worked as a farm laborer. Philis Harris, mother of at least three including Elbert Harris, worked in their family's home. Although it is unclear whether other family members lived in the Harrises' home, Asbury Harris's half-brother, Joseph Harris, was also in Iva at this time. When the officers searched the Harris family home, they reported finding railroad tickets and multiple firearms, which they alleged was evidence to justify a presumption of guilt against Asbury Harris, Joseph Harris, and Elbert Harris. The officers then arrested all three men on the morning of May 20.

A preliminary hearing was held in Iva on the same day the Harrises were arrested, after which all three men were placed in the custody of a specially appointed constable to be transferred to the county jail in Anderson,

approximately 16 miles north of Iva. There, the Harrises were going to await their next court date for further trial proceedings.

The transport left Iva at some time before nightfall on May 20. Roughly two or three miles en route to Anderson, a mob of about 20 white men overtook the escort and seized Elbert Harris, intent on harming him. It is unclear why the mob specifically targeted Elbert Harris during the attack, but the mob told the constable "to wait and they would return him in about an hour." News reports indicated that the constable complied without any objections. It was not uncommon during this era for law enforcement officers to be indifferent to threats posed by white people against Black women, men, and children in their custody or to be ineffective in guaranteeing them custodial protections afforded by the law. Though it is unclear whether the officer was armed, it was clear from news reports that he made no efforts to use force to resist the mob.

The mob proceeded to whip and beat Elbert Harris, then left him lying brutally injured on the side of the road. A member of the mob then returned to the constable and told him where he could find his brutalized body. When the officer found Mr. Harris, he was still on the ground, and he reported being whipped. The constable, placing him back in the escort transportation, continued on with him being in critical condition to the Anderson County Jail. Reports indicate that the county jail sheriff called a doctor to tend to Elbert Harris, who was "very sick" and, upon examination, was found to have "marks of violence" on his back and his legs. However, at 5:00 am on May 25, Elbert Harris was found dead in his cell after suffering at the jail for four days following the beating.

Following Elbert Harris's death, his father, Asbury Harris, and his uncle, Joseph Harris, both remained in the county jail awaiting a grand jury trial. Local newspapers reported that a coroner's jury was summoned for an inquest on the lynching, though the inquest lasted less than a day. The coroner's jury's verdict simply stated that Elbert Harris died "by exhaustion produced from causes unknown to them" and "from the effects of wounds inflicted by unknown parties." On May 31, a local judge called the Grand Jury during the Court of General Sessions "to do their utmost in bringing the guilty parties to justice" concerning the lynching of Elbert Harris. However, there is no indication of a Grand Jury verdict or of any indictments of participants in the mob. By July 2, the Court of General Sessions adjourned, during which time Joseph Harris and Asbury Harris were sentenced to three

months' imprisonment for housebreaking and grand larceny. However, the charges of arson against Joseph Harris had been dropped after a non-guilty verdict, and neither man was ultimately found guilty of burning the gin house and the railroad tracks. Asbury Harris's guilty verdict was later reversed, exonerating him of all charges, and he was released in October 1898.

Elbert Harris's parents went on to sue Anderson County multiple times under Article 6, Section 6 of South Carolina's Constitution of 1895, which allowed for the families of lynching victims to file lawsuits against county governments to collect damages if the lynching victim had been targeted because of preceding criminal accusations against them; however, each attempt by Elbert Harris's parents was unsuccessful. His mother, Philis Harris, filed a lawsuit for $10,000 on December 31, 1898, but her case ended in a "verdict in favor of the county" and was reported as a mistrial. His father also sued for $10,000 and underwent two trials, one in October 1900 and the other in March 1901, which both resulted in a mistrial -- the second concluding with only 3 out of the 12 jurors ruling in favor of the Harris family. As a result, Anderson County was not held accountable for failing to protect Elbert Harris, despite the fact that the circumstances of his death met the state's limited definition of lynching. Like nearly all victims of racial terror lynching, Elbert Harris never had a chance to fairly defend himself for the accusations against him and was killed by a white mob that never faced prosecution for their crime of lynching.

Elbert Harris was one of five Black victims of racial terror lynching documented in Anderson County, and one of at least 189 Black victims killed in South Carolina between 1877 and 1950.

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Location of Soil Collection

According to news reports, on May 20, 1898, a constable was transporting Elbert Harris from Iva, South Carolina to the county jail in Anderson, South Carolina when a white mob of at least 20 men seized Mr. Harris about two to three miles into the journey and whipped him. Four days after the mob's brutal attack, Elbert Harris died at the county jail in Anderson, but no one was ever held accountable for his lynching.

The exact location of Elbert Harris's lynching is unknown. The county jail in Anderson was originally located on what was then the corner of Jail Street and Church Street. The current Anderson City Jail, built in 1956, is located on 401 S Main Street, near the location of the former county jail. In order to retrace the path of terror Elbert Harris was forced to take in critical condition to the county jail after the mob's attack, please consider taking a journey of remembrance to the symbolic locations associated with Elbert Harris's journey to the Anderson County Jail. If it is possible to begin a procession from Iva to Anderson to cover the route the constable may have taken when the mob overtook the Harrises, **please stop approximately two to three miles along the route between Iva and Anderson near a wooded area** to collect soil from a safe and accessible place as a symbolic location of where Elbert Harris was fatally injured by the mob. Otherwise, please travel towards the Anderson City Jail on **401 S Main Street, Anderson, SC 29624** along a route that includes traveling down a main road leading from Iva to Anderson, and please collect soil in a safe and appropriate location near this site in memory of the lynching of Elbert Harris.

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John Laddison
Rock Mills Township, Anderson County, South Carolina
November 24, 1901

On November 24, 1901, a white mob of at least 200 participants captured and lynched a Black farm worker named John Laddison in Rock Mills Township in Anderson County, South Carolina. The day before, a white woman in Rock Mills Township was attacked, and news quickly spread that her assailant was a Black man. Hundreds of white residents in Anderson County mounted a hunt for the alleged Black man that lasted until the evening and into the next day. When the mob found Mr. Laddison, rather than seeking out law enforcement officers to begin an investigation and allow due process, the mob killed Mr. Laddison in a public spectacle lynching. Despite the fact that the lynching occurred in broad daylight and members of mob made no effort to conceal their faces, no one was ever held accountable for the killing of Mr. Laddison. Instead, newspapers praised the actions of the mob and reported in the days following that "some of the best citizens in the County" had participated in the racial terror lynching of John Laddison.

Newspapers reported that on Saturday, November 23, a Black man arrived at the home of a prominent white family on a plantation located eight miles west of Anderson in Rock Mills Township. The Black man reportedly approached the house asking for food and after a dispute broke out, he allegedly shot the white woman inside, wounding her. Reports indicated that the Black man fled the farm, and the white woman's husband and uncle pursued and shot at him.

As news of the incident spread, armed white people in Anderson County gathered at the woman's home in order to mount a search for the alleged assailant. Law enforcement officers arrived at the scene, and led the growing mob of white residents to search throughout Rock Mills Township with bloodhounds. The mob trailed a Black man who was seen near the plantation for several miles until they lost sight of him. Under the leadership of the sheriff, the mob returned back to the plantation where the shooting had occurred and continued to hunt for this Black man all night. However, by Sunday afternoon, neither the law enforcement officers nor the search mob had identified or apprehended anyone as a suspect.

Typical of this era, African Americans in the South faced hostile suspicion and a burdensome presumption of guilt when crimes were reported.

When news of reported Black-on-white violence spread through white communities, regardless of whether evidence supported the alleged reports or not, white mobs were regularly provoked to violent retaliation before local judicial systems could or would act. On Sunday at noon, the armed mob approached a nearby plantation about six miles west of the house where the shooting had occurred. It was reported that when the mob came to the plantation, another Black man living there may have implicated John Laddison, who was at his house. The mob surrounded the man's house and forced Mr. Laddison to come outside. Mr. Laddison was known to work on several farms throughout Anderson County, including on the plantation that the mob ultimately seized him from. The mob carried Mr. Laddison back to the woman's home, and after she said he was her assailant, Mr. Laddison allegedly "confessed" to the crime. Rather than waiting for law enforcement officers to arrive and conduct further investigation, the mob of now nearly 200 white participants lawlessly "decided" that Mr. Laddison "must be put to death."

Though Mr. Laddison's "confession" was later reported as undeniable evidence of his guilt, the confessions of lynching victims like Mr. Laddison were far more reliable evidence of fear, rather than culpability, and were rarely subjected to further investigation or scrutiny. Rather, these "confessions" were quickly used to "justify" the lynchings that followed, despite any beatings or torture used to coerce and obtain them. Disregarding the presence of the functioning criminal justice system in Anderson County for adjudicating any criminal responsibility for the alleged attack, the mob carried Mr. Laddison a mile from the woman's house, near a gin house, and hanged him from a tree. White mob participants fired bullets into Mr. Laddison's body as it hung and pinned a note to Mr. Laddison's coat, which proclaimed that he had been "hanged for shooting a white lady." When the mob dispersed, they left Mr. Laddison's body hanging. It was common during this era for white mobs to abandon the bodies of their victims to terrorize Black community members, as well. These practices, including the note pinned to Mr. Laddison's body, were meant to send a broader message of fear and intimidation to the Black community.

When news of Mr. Laddison's lynching reached the city of Anderson by 5:00 pm that evening, several white people traveled to view his body, which, by that time, had fallen from the rope and lay on the ground. The added presence of white spectators, who gathered to view the bodies of lynching victims, often generated further trauma and distrust among Black

community members, who had to navigate living in proximity to the same white residents in the aftermath of lynchings. Several days later, newspapers also reported that a handful of Black people in Rock Mills Township had been present at the lynching. Black community members living in communities where lynchings took place had to navigate the dynamics of interacting with white residents who also participated in mobs that killed Black people. Racial terror lynchings created environments where Black people knew and may have witnessed their white neighbors enacting violence against other Black men, women, and children through lynchings that reaffirmed and reinforced racial hierarchy. When mob violence was being enacted, Black people were often without the safety or ability to respond in ways that indicated how they felt about the violence. At the same time, newspapers reporting on the presence of Black people at lynchings additionally sought to "justify" a mob's violent actions by suggesting that it was sanctioned by members of the Black community. In reality, most Black people in this era had little choice about how to respond to such mob violence in the face of their armed white neighbors who were committed to white supremacy and social dominance.

Mr. Laddison's body lay on the ground until Monday morning, when the coroner finally arrived. The coroner held an inquest, and the jury determined that Mr. Laddison had died by "hands of parties unknown." Despite the lynching occuring in broad daylight and newspapers reporting that "some of the best citizens of the County participated in the lynching," there were no reports that further investigation or arrests were made. Instead, newspaper accounts praised the actions of the mob for conducting this brutal violence "quietly and in an orderly manner." It was common in this era for narratives of vengeance reported in the sympathetic white press to glorify white mobs' violence, while routinely failing to elevate the Constitutional rights of equal protection under the law for Black people. White press also often appealed to accusations of criminal behavior and bad character to generate sympathy for the actions of lynch mobs at the expense of due concern for the rights and humanity of their victims. By focusing on details about the wounded white woman and the subsequent lynching, white press accounts did little to denounce the violence done to Mr. Laddison and instead perpetuated the deadly stereotype of African American men as threats to white womanhood.

In the end, no one was held accountable for the death of Mr. Laddison. Little had been reported about John Laddison's background, except that he had also been ensnared in the dangerous and exploitative system of convict leasing before his death. While completing a prior sentence in the county of

Newbury, South Carolina, Mr. Laddison had been among those who were "leased" to work on the plantation in Anderson County, which was the same plantation on which the mob seized him. Frequently subjected to inhumane conditions, Black people following the Civil War and into the 20th century were exploited through this new form of enslavement made legally possible through the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery except for punishment of a crime. The widespread economic exploitation of Black people continued for generations after slavery's end. Even after his release, Mr. Laddison continued to work on plantations in and around Anderson County in the days leading up to his lynching, reflecting the difficulty that he and many Black people faced to move beyond the plantation-based economic system of the South and into better opportunities.

John Laddison is one of at least five African American victims of racial terror lynching killed in Anderson County, and one of at least 189 victims in South Carolina between 1877-1950.

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In Remembrance: Lynching in America
The Soil Collection Project
Equal Justice Initiative

Location of Soil Collection

On November 24, 1901, at least 200 people in Anderson County, South Carolina gathered to lynch John Laddison in a public spectacle lynching. After reports that a Black man had wounded a white woman in her home in Rock Mills Township, white mobs gathered at the plantation where the shooting occurred and led by the sheriff, searched for a suspect. Traveling westward, the mob used bloodhounds and hunted for the alleged Black man for over twelve hours, passing by a plantation owned by Robert Chamblee and reaching the Savannah River. The next day, the mob located Mr. Laddison several miles near the plantation where the shooting occurred on a farm that he previously worked on and lynched him a mile from the farm near "Gray's gin house."

In 1901, the Rock Mills Township referred to the central-west region of Anderson County where the county line meets the Savannah River. Newspapers report that the plantation on which the shooting occurred was owned by a prominent family with the surname Glenn. An 1877 map of Rock Mills Township illustrates two plantations owned by the Chamblee and Glenn families in the eastern part of the township near Devil Forks Creek.

Today, an old ginhouse is located a few miles from these plantations near Devil Forks Creek in the eastern part of what was Rock Mills Township. Although it is unclear if "Gray's gin house" stood at this site, this would be an appropriate symbolic location to collect soil for Mr. Laddison. Please travel to **5005 Dobbins Bridge Rd, Anderson, SC 29626**. Southeast of this location - where Dobbins Bridge Road and New Hope Road converge - is the site of the Center Rock Gin. Please collect soil from a safe and appropriate area at this location to memorialize the lynching of John Laddison.

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Reuben Elrod
Brushy Creek Township, Anderson County, South Carolina, June 30, 1903

At around 10 p.m. on the night of June 30, 1903, an armed mob of up to 50 white men attacked the home of an elderly African American man named Reuben Elrod to terrorize him and three Black women who lived in his home in Anderson County, South Carolina. Claiming that Mr. Elrod was defying white social expectations by allowing the women to stay in his home, the mob surrounded Mr. Elrod's house to "chastise" him and those taking shelter in Mr. Elrod's home. When Mr. Elrod tried to defend himself and those in his household, the mob shot Mr. Elrod once in the neck, killing him inside his home. The mob then terrorized the three women, whose names are unknown, stripped them naked, dragged them outside, whipped and threatened them, and told them to leave the county.

During the era of racial terrorism, anticipating the whims, preferences, and expectations of white people became a matter of safety and survival for Black Southerners. White people's attitudes and perceptions towards Black homes and families were often steeped in the mythology of white supremacy and Black inferiority, which led to dangerous stereotypes and presumptions that intensified the racial hostility of white people toward Black communities. In 1903, Reuben Elrod, an elderly Black man in his mid- to late-60s, lived with his wife in Anderson County, just outside of Piedmont in either Brushy Creek or Williamston Township. Mr. Elrod supported his family as a farmer prior to 1900, and later as a day laborer, and his wife worked as a washerwoman in the community. In June of 1903, Mr. Elrod's home came under scrutiny by other white residents near his home due to the presence of three Black women who came to stay with his family. Though several reports indicated that the women were likely other family members, an accusation began to emerge that Mr. Elrod was housing "loose" and "objectionable" women in his home. Records do not indicate that Mr. Elrod had been involved in any prior conflicts regarding his social or economic standing in the community prior to this time. However, the mere perception by the surrounding white community that Mr. Elrod was involved in a social transgression made him a target for lethal white mob violence.

Several reports indicated that on June 30, 1903, a mob of 50 white men, who were thought to be "whitecaps," came to Mr. Elrod's house determined to punish him for the alleged conduct of his home. The whitecapping movement

that was active in the rural South during this era, from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, primarily included poor, white farmers who used targeted violence and intimidation against Black people deemed to be economic competition or in violation of their racial and social expectations. Mr. Elrod and the three women staying at his residence were in the home when the mob arrived, but it is unclear whether Mr. Elrod's wife was also present. When the mob demanded the three women come outside to be whipped, press accounts indicated that Mr. Elrod sought to defend his home and the women staying there. However, someone from the mob shot into Mr. Elrod's house, and the bullet struck Mr. Elrod in the throat, killing him. The mob then seized the three women staying in Mr. Elrod's home, severely beat and terrorized them, and demanded that they leave the community.

In the aftermath of Reuben Elrod's lynching and the attack on the three Black women in his home, several press accounts indicated that the attack and lynching were "strongly condemned," but sympathetic white press accounts still reinforced the false narrative that Mr. Elrod was to blame for the mob's attack. A local newspaper in Anderson, South Carolina, *The Intelligencer*, reported that Mr. Elrod came "to his undoing" due to his "reputation" regarding the Black women who stayed at his house. By accepting the mob's narrative as being warranted and reproducing the accusation against Mr. Elrod, *The Intelligencer* further stigmatized Mr. Elrod's family and denied dignity to the Black women who had been lawlessly beaten by the white mob. Sympathetic white press accounts like these often failed to defend the sanctity of Black people's lives and homes, as well as their constitutional right to equal protection under the law. Instead, these public narratives in white press accounts often served to perpetuate false stereotypes about Black men as being prone to sexual impropriety and justified the lynchings that followed – lynchings that ultimately emphasized the power of white men over Black manhood. This ensured that Black men like Mr. Elrod, who defended Black women, were likely to lose their lives in defiance to white demands.

Several days after the attack on Mr. Elrod's home, a local magistrate ordered an inquiry and a coroner's inquest began. The three women testified to the details of the attack but, having been severely beaten and terrorized by an overwhelming mob, they did not recognize or publicly name any of the attackers. Black survivors of racial terrorism were often deeply traumatized

and experienced fear and intimidation when called upon to identify mob participants. It was not unusual during this era for mobs to make public of targeted threats that they would violently retaliate if their identities were exposed. Though it is unclear based on news reports how long the coroner's inquest lasted, *The Greenville News* reported on July 3, 1903 that the coroner's jury had reached the conclusion that Mr. Elrod "was murdered by parties unknown." Reflecting on the jury's conclusions, the article stated that, "it does seem strange that an intelligent body of men, living near the scene where the crime was committed, should go on record as saying that [Mr. Elrod] was murdered by parties unknown. Such a verdict should not be allowed to stand." The article further indicated that with "no friends to see that his murder is avenged," and due to "a desire, however, to protect the guilty," it seemed evident that "justice [would] not be done" concerning the lynching of Reuben Elrod.

The Greenville News account reflected the widespread practice of white officials and community members during this era to grant immunity to white mobs in the aftermath of lynchings. Of the more than 4400 racial terror lynchings of Black people that occurred between 1877 and 1950, fewer than one percent resulted in white mob participants being successfully prosecuted for their crimes of lynching. Due to consistent negligence to hold white mobs accountable for racial terror and violence, reports of lynchings in other communities emboldened the same lawlessness in other white communities, as well. Condemning the fact that on the same night that Mr. Elrod was killed, another large white mob lynched a Black man named Charles Evans in Orangeburg County, South Carolina, *The Greenville News* report concluded that "the lawless elements must learn that they are not supreme, and crime of this sort will not cease" without legal accountability. Despite the fact that the fifty members of the mob had come through Reuben Elrod's community that night, no one was ever identified or held accountable for their actions in the lynching of Reuben Elrod.

Reuben Elrod was one of at least 5 African American victims of racial terror lynchings killed in Anderson County between 1877 and 1950.

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In Remembrance: Lynching in America
The Soil Collection Project
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Location of Soil Collection

According to news reports, Reuben Elrod was at his family home in Anderson County, South Carolina, when a white mob attacked the house, shooting and killing him and brutally whipping the three women in the house on June 30, 1903. Mr. Elrod's address is unknown, but reports indicate he lived just a few miles outside of Piedmont, South Carolina, in Williamston Township or Brushy Creek Township. Today Piedmont is a small community of just over 5,000 residents, whose population is just five percent African American.

Though Mr. Elrod's address is unknown, records suggest he or other family members may have lived in a residence near the border of Brushy Creek and Williamston Townships. An approximate address for this site is **1099 Elrod Road, Piedmont, South Carolina 29673**. Please collect soil from a safe and appropriate area at this location to memorialize the lynching of Reuben Elrod.

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Willis Jackson
Honea Path, Anderson County, South Carolina, October 10, 1911

Just before midnight on Tuesday, October 10, 1911, a white mob lynched a 17-year-old Black boy named Willis Jackson in a wooded area in Honea Path, South Carolina. Led by a state representative of the South Carolina State Legislature, the mob pursued Willis Jackson and law enforcement officers across three different cities in "one of the most sensational man chases this section of [Anderson] county has ever known." Despite members of the mob being well-known in the community and the mob's complete disregard for Anderson County's legal system, no members of the mob were held accountable for the lynching of Willis Jackson.

During this era of racial terrorism, Black men, women, and children faced a burdensome -- and at times, fatal -- presumption of guilt that resulted in hostile suspicion directed towards Black communities when crimes against white people were reported. On the morning of October 10, close to 7:30 a.m., the daughter of a "prominent" white man from Honea Path reported being assaulted by a Black man near her home. News of the assault spread rapidly, and white men from Honea Path began "pouring into town by all roads and excitement [ran]... high." Honea Path law enforcement officers began searching for suspects, and the growing mob of white men also searched in the woods and areas around the girl's home.

Within approximately thirty minutes after the crime was reported, the officers arrested at least three Black men, including Willis Jackson. Although little is known about Willis Jackson, newspapers reported that he worked in Honea Path as a local delivery boy for a local butcher shop in the meat market. News accounts did not provide details about why the officers directed suspicion at him, but it is possible that he was known to have made deliveries to the girl's home. By 8:00 a.m. that morning, one of the officers came to the butcher shop where Willis Jackson worked and took him into custody. By then, Willis was the second person to have been arrested, as the "first suspect" was released after not being identified by the girl as her assailant. However, when the girl said she thought Willis Jackson was the alleged

attacker after he was brought for identification, he was immediately presumed guilty without further investigation.

Almost 25 percent of racial terror lynchings during this era were sparked by charges of sexual assault, a time when the mere accusation of sexual impropriety could quickly arouse violent mobs and end in lynching. After Willis Jackson was accused of the alleged assault, Honea Path officers acknowledged the immediate threat of mob violence and decided to transfer him to the county jail in Anderson, South Carolina. When the officers arrived at Anderson with Willis Jackson in custody at 9:30 a.m., he was immediately placed in the county jail. However, the mob at Honea Path, now being led by a white, South Carolina state legislator named Joshua Ashley, remained "bent on lynching" him.

Some time before noon, a call came in to the Anderson County Jail from Honea Path indicating that "the angry mob was increasing rapidly, and that it was likely the crowd would come to Anderson to storm the jail." The Anderson sheriff responded by attempting to barricade the jail and called for his deputy sheriff and several Anderson officers to be armed and ready in case the mob arrived. The mayor of Honea Path had also been alerted to the mob's plans and reached out to South Carolina Governor Coleman Blease to request that he order a special term of court in order to accelerate Willis Jackson's trial to occur within two weeks time. It was reported that Governor Blease said he would order the special term and that the mayor of Honea Path appealed to the mob to let "the law be allowed to dispose of [Willis Jackson]." However, white officials often offered these appeals to pacify white mobs rather than to guarantee the safety of Black people accused of crimes. Though the appeals seemingly urged the rule of law, Black people often lacked meaningful access to legal representation, were denied the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, and were tried before all white juries who rarely spent much time deliberating before finding Black defendants guilty of the accusations against them. In Honea Path, even with these attempts to ensure the mob that a legal execution would take place , the governor and mayor were ignored, and the mob mobilized itself to head to the Anderson County Jail.

With the mob on the way, the Anderson sheriff called the sheriff in Greenville, South Carolina and informed him that he needed to transfer Willis Jackson to the Greenville County Jail there. By 12:45 p.m., the deputy sheriff transporting Willis Jackson was on the way to Greenville. Reports indicated that within twenty minutes of the transfer car leaving Anderson, "more than 100 heavily armed men arrived in the city," having come by trolley car, automobiles and even train. The mob went to the Anderson County Jail but learned that Willis Jackson had been transferred to Greenville. Several members of the mob returned to their vehicles and resumed their pursuit. Though the mob was set on lynching Willis Jackson, some residents from Honea Path who traveled to Anderson throughout that day were reportedly "of the belief that the wrong man had been arrested."

The escort car carrying Willis Jackson arrived in Greenville close to 1:50 p.m., but reports quickly reached Greenville that the mob was close to overtaking the officers and kidnapping Willis Jackson from the Greenville County Jail. It was common for white mobs during this era to use violent force to seize their victims from police custody or out of jails, prisons, and court rooms without fear of legal repercussion. Though law enforcement officers sometimes attempted to transfer Black people in their custody to other locations to avoid mob violence or lynching, armed officers rarely used force to resist white mobs. To avoid the mob, the Greenville sheriff and Anderson deputy sheriff decided to keep going and to try to transfer Willis Jackson safely to the jail in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

When the mob arrived in Greenville, Representative Joshua Ashley "clutched a winchester rifle in his hands and eagerly inquired where [Willis Jackson] had been taken." Again, rather than being dispelled by the Greenville police officers, Rep. Ashley was told that Willis was being transferred to Spartanburg. So the mob resumed the chase, taking multiple routes from Greenville to Spartanburg in search of the escort car.

Due to the muddy roads en route to Spartanburg, the escort car carrying the Greenville sheriff, Anderson deputy sheriff, Willis Jackson, and a young man acting as the driver was making poor headway. The Greenville sheriff later reported that fearing the mob would overtake them, the two officers decided to take Willis Jackson, exit the car, and hide in nearby woods

until reinforcements from Spartanburg could arrive. They sent the driver back to Greenville, instructing him to take a "circuitous" route and to not tell anyone about their location. As the driver pulled away, the officers and Willis Jackson headed about two miles into the woods to hide.

Though the mob had trailed closely, the diversion strategy was effective. Unable to locate the escort car on the roads between Greenville and Spartanburg, the mob began to head back to Honea Path. However, Rep. Ashley's car reached Greenville and he and three others in his car saw the escort car parked in the city. Still determined to find Willis Jackson, Ashley and the white men with him inquired about where the driver could be found. The men eventually located the driver, cornered him in a drug store, and forced him to go with them in Ashley's car and to disclose the location where the officers and Willis Jackson were hiding. Under duress, the young man revealed the location as the mob closed in on the wooded area.

The Greenville sheriff reported that the first man he saw was Ashley, who came forward and "grabbed" Willis Jackson from him. A "sharp tussle" ensued, but the officers decided "there was no use of shedding blood" and did not use force to resist the mob further. The mob seized Willis and told the officers that they "would not harm" him, but would take him back to Honea Path and "consult the older heads of the town as to what was best to do." It was later reported that the Anderson deputy sheriff sat next to Willis Jackson on the drive back before the mob left the officers and headed on to Honea Path. The Anderson deputy sheriff went on to state later that he did not believe Willis Jackson was guilty of the accused crime.

The mob reached Honea Path around 11:00 p.m. and immediately took Willis Jackson to the white girl's home reportedly for re-identification. When the white girl said she thought Willis was her assailant a second time, the mob proceeded to take him near the site of the alleged assault in a wooded area. In the woods, Willis Jackson allegedly "broke down and confessed his guilt, but pleaded with the mob not to kill him." Like many victims of racial terror lynching, Willie Jackson's alleged statement would have taken place under extreme fear for his life or under false pretenses that the mob would not engage in torturous violence if a confession was made. White mobs then used the 'confessions' as 'justification' for the racial terror lynchings that

followed, though the confessions of lynching victims were always more reliable evidence of fear than culpability.

Despite his pleas for mercy, the mob of at least 500 white men found a nearby telephone pole, tied a rope around Willis Jackson's left foot, and hoisted him into the air by his foot, pulling the rope over the pole. When Willis Jackson was dangling about 15 feet in the air, one member of the mob shot at him, and then the entire mob opened fire on the young Black teenager. It was reported that before the mob finished that evening around 11:24 p.m., an estimated 400 shots had been fired, mutilating his body. The mob dispersed thereafter, leaving Willis Jackson's body hanging from the telephone pole.

The Greenville News reporting on the lynching estimated that 5000 people may have witnessed the lynching as spectators or active mob participants. Public spectacle lynchings often involved large gatherings of hundreds to thousands of white people who came to view or participate in the brutal, extrajudicial killings of Black people. These public spectacle lynchings often took on carnival like atmospheres that sometimes involved vendors, photographs, or even 'souveniers' from the lynching victim's remains. In Honea Path, it was reported that "several fingers of [Willis Jackson] were severed for souvenirs during the night," and it was not until approximately 9:30 a.m. the next morning when the coroner finally arrived and removed his body from the telephone pole.

News of Willis Jackson's lynching was reported throughout the cities where the mob had recklessly pursued him and law enforcement officers across roughly 100 miles. White press accounts offered varying views on the mob's actions; however, news reports clearly condemned Willis Jackson despite the lack of due process in determining whether he was involved in the alleged crime. Common during this era, these reports often relied on false narratives about the dangerousness of Black men as a threat to white womanhood. *The Intelligencer* newspaper of Anderson, South Carolina, wrote an article openly stating,

> *The Intelligencer not only goes on record as favoring lynch law in rape cases, but will take a hand, as it did*

> *Tuesday, in putting a quick end to such beasts, even if it is necessary to ride fifty miles to do it…We do not care a galvanized --- what other people think of the matter, but we are never going to concede that a rape fiend, such as we have in evidence almost every day in South Carolina, is entitled to any law outside of a rope or shotgun.*

The inflammatory piece expressed the frequently embraced and deadly narrative that white mob violence and lynching was justifiable in some cases, intentionally setting aisde the complete lawlessness of mob violence and lynching, even in the presence of functioning legal systems. Rather than upholding constitutional due process and the rule of law, the piece sought to glorify the white mob that killed Willis Jackson, who never had a chance to defend himself in a court of law. This impunity shown towards white mobs by local press during this era enabled the perpetuation of racial terror lynching for decades.

Despite *The Intelligencer*'s article celebrating and lauding the white mob that killed Willis Jackson, other papers voiced dissent concerning the lynching from editors and local community members. In *The Watchman and Southron* newspaper based in Sumter, South Carolina, an article entitled "Respect for Law" was printed, in which the lynching, the white mob, and particularly, the involvement of Rep. Joshua Ashley were denounced. The article stated that "there was no excuse for Josh Ashley's lawless pursuit of the Sheriffs of Anderson and Greenville counties, no excuse for forcibly taking possession of [Willis Jackson] and delivering him to the mob to be killed while he, Josh Ashley, the hero, slipped away to his home, so as not to be present when the actual killing was done." Even so, the article still leaned heavily on presuming the guilt of Willis Jackson, seeing "no question of his guilt" and that either way, his end would have been execution, only legally so. The commentary reflected the difficulty that Black men, women, and children faced in receiving fair hearings and trials and the protection of their constitutional right to be presumed innocent during this era. Others in the white community, including a white pastor in Anderson named Reverend John F. Vines and the Anderson County Ministers' Conference, also denounced Willis Jackson's lynching, the mob, Rep. Joshua Ashley, and the

coroner for "the failure...to fix the blame for the lynching on the guilty parties." The conference included their denunciation in a ministerial resolution and expressed "deepest sympathy" to Willis Jackson's family.

Racial terror lynchings like Willis Jackson's were deeply traumatic experiences for Black families and communities, resulting in intense fear and intimidation after white mob violence. Black people had to navigate arbitrary and threatening systems of racial hierarchy in order to avoid further lethal violence. To survive in such hostile environments, family members sometimes felt compelled to deny or forgo dignified funeral services for their loved ones. Due to the heavy presumption of guilt against Willis Jackson in the white press before and after his lynching, Willis Jackson's mother reportedly denied wanting to claim her son's remains if he was "guilty of such a crime." Other Black residents also "refused to allow the burial of the body in their burial ground." However, never convicted of any crime, the presumption of innocence followed Willis Jackson to the grave. He was later buried "at the expense of the county" outside of the Black community.

Before the end of the day on October 11, the coroner's inquest had come to an end. Only five or six witnesses had been examined, but no one had come forward to identify members of the mob or provide further testimony or more substantial information. In the end, the coroner's jury rendered the verdict that "Willis Jackson came to his death from gunshot wounds at the hands of an unknown mob." Even though leaders and members of the mob were well-known, such as Rep. Joshua Ashley, no one was held accountable for the lynching of Willis Jackson.

Willis Jackson was one of at least five documented African American victims of racial terror lynching killed in Anderson County, and one of at least 189 documented victims of racial terror lynching killed in the State of South Carolina between 1877 and 1950.

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Location of Soil Collection

According to press accounts, on October 10, 1911, an angry white mob led by a local state legislator pursued a young Black teenager named Willis Jackson on a 100 mile man-chase intent on lynching him. Starting from Honea Path, South Carolina, the mob pursued law enforcement officers and Willis Jackson to Anderson, Greenville, and part-way to Spartanburg. The mob overtook the officers and Willis Jackson in a wooded area about "six miles north of Greenville" prior to reaching Spartanburg. The mob took Willis Jackson back to Honea Path, and lynched him near the site of the alleged assault of a white girl. Despite members of the mob being known members of the community and there being hundreds to even thousands of spectators, no one was held accountable for the lynching of Willis Jackson.

Articles detailed that when the mob returned to Honea Path, they carried Willis Jackson to the home of the white girl who reported the assault, which was "about one-half mile from the business section of town." The mob then carried Willis Jackson to the site of the alleged assault, which was described as being "about fifty yards distant [from the girl's house] down the public road" and "within 300 yards of the incorporated limits of Honea Path...about seventy-five yards into a patch of woods." While these details were insufficient to identify the exact location of the lynching site, historically, the business district of Honea Path included the location of the Chiquola Mill site in Honea Path, and today, the majority of businesses in Honea Path are located on North Main Street and East Greer Street, with others on Church and Shirley Streets. Additional conversation with the Honea Path community may yield additional insights about Willis Jackson's journey and lynching.

Prior to his lynching, Honea Path police officers transferred Willis Jackson to the county jail in Anderson. The original county jail in Anderson in 1911 was located at **125 West Church Street, Anderson, South Carolina**, though it is no longer located in this area. A site at or near this location could serve as a meaningful symbolic location for a soil collection in memory of Willis Jackson. Please travel to this sites and collect soil from a safe and appropriate area to acknowledge the lynching of Willis Jackson.